

Message Text

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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BONN 04229

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TAGS: OVIP, ETRN, GW
SUBJECT: DEPUTY SECRETARY'S VISIT: BIOGRAPHIC NOTES
ON HEINZ RUHNAU, STATE SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

REF: 1. GALLAGHER/PIEPER TELECON, 3/6/78, 2. BONN 3768

1. A LONGTIME SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (SPD) MEMBER, HEINZ RUHNAU, 48, HAS A POLITICAL RATHER THAN A TECHNICAL OR ADMINISTRATIVE BACKGROUND. HE CAME TO HIS PRESENT POSITION, THE SECOND HIGHEST IN THE MINISTRY, IN 1974, WHEN HELMUT SCHMIDT, THE PRESENT CHANCELLOR, TOOK OVER FROM WILLY BRANDT.

2. THE STATE SECRETARY COMES FROM HAMBURG, AS DOES SCHMIDT, AND IS CLOSE TO THE CHANCELLOR. PREVIOUSLY, RUHNAU HAD BEEN ACTIVE IN GOVERNMENT AND SPD POLITICS IN HAMBURG. HE SERVED AS THAT CITY-STATE'S INTERIOR MINISTER (1965-73) AND WAS A MEMBER OF THE HAMBURG PARLIAMENT (1961-70).

3. RUHNAU, A NATIVE OF DANZIG, CAME TO WEST GERMANY IN 1946 AND BEGAN A CAREER IN TRADE UNION AFFAIRS. UNDER UNION SPONSORSHIP, HE STUDIED AT THE HAMBURG ACADEMY FOR ECONOMICS AND POLITICS DURING 1952-54 AND THEN SERVED AS PERSONAL SECRETARY TO OTTO BRENNER,
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THEN HEAD OF IG METALL, THE LARGEST INDUSTRIAL UNION IN THE WORLD. FROM 1959 UNTIL HE BECAME INTERIOR MINISTER IN 1965, RUHNAU WAS DISTRICT CHAIRMAN OF IG METALL IN HAMBURG.

4. IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE, RUHNAU, WHO JOINED THE SPD IN 1949, BECAME A MEMBER OF THE HAMBURG LAND

(STATE) SPD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IN 1957 AND WAS ELECTED THE COMMITTEE'S DEPUTY CHAIRMAN IN 1966. AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL, HE WAS A MEMBER OF THE SPD EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE FROM 1968 UNTIL 1973, AND HE IS A FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE SPD MEDIA COMMISSION. FROM 1973 UNTIL HIS PRESENT APPOINTMENT, RUHNAU WAS A MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF CO-OP AG, THE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF GERMAN CONSUMER COOPERATIVES IN HAMBURG.

5. AN ARTICULATE RIGHT-WINGER IN THE PARTY, RUHNAU IS ONE OF THE FEW SOCIAL DEMOCRATS IN A HIGH POSITION WHO HAS A WORKING-CLASS BACKGROUND. HE MAINTAINS CLOSE RELATIONS WITH AMERICAN TRADE UNION OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY IN THE UAW AND HEADS THE SPD STUDY GROUP CONCERNED WITH RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SPD AND THE U.S.

6. BEFORE AND DURING THE TENSE TIME OF THE GERMAN COMMANDO ATTACK AGAINST THE HIJACKED LUFTHANSA PLANE AT MOGADISCIO, RUHNAU REPRESENTED THE TRANSPORT MINISTRY IN THE GOVERNMENT'S CRISIS CENTER. BECAUSE OF HEIGHTENED GERMAN SECURITY CONCERNS AND HIS INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANTI-TERRORIST STRIKE FORCE, RUHNAU NOW HAS TWO BODYGUARDS ASSIGNED TO HIM ON A PERMANENT BASIS.

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7. RUHNAU, WHO SPEAKS ENGLISH WELL, HAS BEEN A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THE UNITED STATES: IN 1960 AND AGAIN IN 1965, HE WAS THE RECIPIENT OF INTERNATIONAL VISITOR PROGRAM GRANTS. HE HAS BEEN FRIENDLY AND ACCESSIBLE TO AMERICANS, BOTH EMBASSY AND VISITORS. HE IS MARRIED; HE AND HIS WIFE, INGE, HAVE TWO DAUGHTERS, ELKE AND ANTJE, BOTH STUDENTS. IN HIS SPARE TIME, RUHNAU ENJOYS JAZZ, RUSSIAN LITERATURE AND GROWING FLOWERS.

8. RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TRANSPORT MINISTRY AND THE USG: RELATIONS BETWEEN THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT (FMT) AND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ARE GENERALLY VERY GOOD, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT IN AGREEMENT ON ALL MATTERS. THERE IS EXTENSIVE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE FMT AND THE DOT WITH FREQUENT EXCHANGES OF VISITS. RUHNAU HAS VISITED WASHINGTON A NUMBER OF TIMES IN CONNECTION WITH THESE PROGRAMS. DOT AND FMT ARE CURRENTLY DISCUSSING DOT PARTICIPATION IN THE 1979 HAMBURG TRANSPORT EXHIBITION. ISSUES ON WHICH WE DIFFER ARE IN THE FIELDS OF AVIATION AND OCEAN SHIPPING. NONE ARE PARTICULARLY TENSE AT PRESENT.

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